

# FOCUS

## Fans Push Oprah to Pursue Politics



Oprah Winfrey speaks to a sold-out crowd of 2,600 at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle, Saturday, May 31, as part of her four-city "Live Your Best Life Tour" seminar. (AP Photo)

### Talk show host has other ideas

Oprah for president? A fan was handing out orange bumper stickers promoting the idea, but don't hold your breath. The idea doesn't interest Oprah Winfrey - top daytime TV talk-show host, magazine publisher, movie star, honored literacy booster and all-round mover and shaker. "People say, 'Never say never,'" Winfrey said with a broad smile, her big heart-shaped diamond earrings sparkling. But when it comes to politics, "I can say, never." Winfrey was in Seattle last Saturday for the second stop in her "Live Your Best Life Tour" sponsored by O, The Oprah Magazine. The four-city tour features a two-hour presentation by Winfrey, offering insights and anecdotes from

her own life, followed by three hours of more personal contact. Tickets were \$185 - the pricetag also covers lunch and a gift bag - and there were reports of four-figure re-sales on e-Bay. Of the 2,700 ticketholders, almost all were women. "We want to learn how to live our best life," said Teresa Gove, a 38-year-old insurance claims representative who flew up from California for the event. "We love Oprah," said Dianne Enkerud, 60, a medical transcriptionist from Tumwater. "She has a real gift. She knows how to motivate people - women in particular." Hydrology engineer Doug Beyerlein, 52, of Mill Creek is hoping to see that gift expanded - perhaps into the national political arena. He came up with the bumper stickers, which he and his wife, Joan, handed out to all and sundry.

"I just don't like what our current administration is doing, both domestically and overseas," Beyerlein said. "I feel we need to change our priorities." He said he has confidence in Winfrey's motivation and values, as articulated on her show and in her magazine. "I don't care what party she runs for. ... I'd be happy to vote for her regardless," Beyerlein said. And if she's not interested in running, he hopes that the very idea "will get people talking, bring up issues that need to be discussed." Winfrey shakes her head. She wouldn't discuss the current administration - "I don't talk politics" - and has no interest in becoming a candidate. Her next goal, she says, is to become an ambassador for the world's children, especially orphans.

## Lawyer Argues Ross's Breath Tests Illegal

(AP)—Diana Ross' attorney in a drunken driving case is asking a judge to throw out breath test results and statements the singer made to Arizona police on the night she was arrested. Ross, 59, was arrested on Dec. 30. She has pleaded innocent to the charge. Police said she had a blood-alcohol level of 0.20 percent. The legal



Diana Ross

limit in Arizona is 0.08 percent. Defense attorney Stephen Paul Barnard has filed a motion arguing that police conducted a search without a warrant, which "raises the issue of the legality of the arrest and subsequent search and seizure." After she was given a breath test, arrested and informed of her rights, officers told

Ross that more breath tests were needed. Barnard said there was an element of coercion because Ross was given the choice of taking more tests and being allowed to go home or being taken to a hospital, a police station or to jail, where she would be subject to the tests after police received a warrant. Prosecutors said the argument is misplaced. Under Arizona law, anyone arrested for drunken driving automatically consents to blood alcohol content testing.

## Aretha Arson Probe May Get State Help

Queen of Soul lost her \$1.6 million mansion to fire

(AP)— Authorities investigating an Oct. 25 arson that destroyed Aretha Franklin's Illinois mansion plan to ask the state Attorney General's office for help. A meeting of police and fire officials and the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office last week failed

to produce a consensus on what, if any, charges could be issued, prosecutors said. Prosecutors said "legal and factual complexities" in the case prompted them to request an independent review and analysis by Attorney General Mike Cox's office. County officials said they would offer no additional comment on the



Aretha Franklin

case until the state review. Franklin, dubbed the Queen of Soul, lost her \$1.6 million Bloomfield Township mansion in the Oct. 25 blaze, which authorities ruled as arson. Franklin was subpoenaed and met with investigators in February. The 61-year-old singer was out of the state at the time of the fire.

## Tony Rock to Host Oxygen Channel Game Show



(AP)— Tony Rock may be an easy name to say and remember, but the comedian's manager still suggested he change it professionally. That's because he thought it would be easier for the comic to establish himself without dealing with the pressure of being Chris Rock's younger brother. Rock dis-

missed the talk. "I was always called 'little Chris' growing up," said the 33-year-old Rock, who hosts a new game show, "Can You Tell," premiering June 16 on the Oxygen network. The family connection "is a double-edged sword," he said Tuesday. But Rock is keeping busy;

Tony Rock, second from left on the bottom, is seen with other cast members of the new UPN sitcom, "All of Us," which premieres this fall. The younger brother of comedian Chris Rock says there is some sibling rivalry but he's staying busy - and successful - as the host of an Oxygen network game show that premieres June 16.

aside from the Oxygen show, he's in the cast of the new UPN sitcom, "All of Us," beginning this fall. He says there's some sibling rivalry. When Chris, 37, showed up to try out new material at a comedy club where Tony was working recently, Tony followed him onstage with all his best jokes - and got bigger laughs.



Joe Morton, left, as Walter Diggles, Jon Voight as Sheriff Billy Rowles, Kate Trotter as Jamie Rowles and Louis Gossett Jr. as R.C. Horn appear in a scene from Showtime's "Jasper, Texas." The film premieres Sunday at 8 p.m., to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the murder of James Byrd, Jr., who was chained to the back of a pickup truck and dragged to his death. (AP Photo)

## Film Examines Dragging Death

Movie looks to find the story behind the gruesome events

(AP)— A legion of Black Panthers has come to march. An army of Klansmen is on its way. And 8,000 townspeople are struggling to squelch the racial furor that divides them as three white men head to trial for the violent killing of a black man.

This was the scene in the summer of 1998 in Jasper, Texas. It's also the powder-keg moment reenacted in the Showtime docudrama "Jasper, Texas," about a community rocked and rent by tragedy yet showing amazing grace.

The film premieres at 8 p.m. Sunday, a day after the fifth anniversary of the murder of James Byrd Jr., who was chained to the back of a pickup truck and dragged to his death.

"The challenge was to find the story, because real events don't necessarily represent the human story," says writer and executive

producer Jonathan Estrin. "What I'm after is the emotional truth." After several years of research and interviews with Jasper residents, Estrin uses the Byrd murder - including a subtle recreation of the dragging and archival footage

they battle their personal demons and outside agitators while attempting to maintain control of their community.

"Jasper is America ... it's really no different than many other parts of America," says Estrin. "If this

*Jasper is America ... it's really no different than many other parts of America.*

— Jonathan Estrin, writer and executive producer for 'Jasper, Texas,' a Showtime film that examines the 1998 dragging death of African American James Byrd, Jr.

of an outraged nation - as the backdrop for this portrait of a town divided.

The story centers on Sheriff Billy Rowles (Jon Voight) and R.C. Horn (Louis Gossett Jr.), Jasper's newly appointed and first black mayor, as

had happened in Los Angeles or New York there probably would have been riots or civil unrest. What surprised me, in many ways, is that these people came up against extraordinary circumstances and simply tried to do the right thing."

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